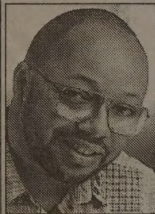


If behavior isn't threatening, why is it bothersome?

When we were younger, my brother used to get engaged to a different woman every spring. Used to call it off every fall.

It wasn't exactly a shock to any of us when he said he was gay. For me, at least, it was more of a relief. A sign that he had finally come to terms with who he is.



**LEONARD
PITTS JR.**

From time to time, I've been asked if I'm disappointed or upset at my brother's sexual orientation. I've never understood the question. Why should I care? Why should I be bothered about a thing that has nothing to do with me?

Too bad conservative Christian groups don't share that philosophy. We might have been spared their recently renewed frontal assault on American gays. In case you missed it: Full-page ads began appearing in the New York Times, the Washington Post and other newspapers. The ads, coordinated by the Center for Reclaiming America, founded by Coral Ridge Ministries of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., call on gays to "confront the truth of their sexual sin" and renounce their sexual orientation. Or, if they must be gay, then at least be celibate.

How condescending and paternalistic. Not unlike an atheist who said, "If you must be Chris-

tian, at least don't pray."

It gets worse, though. The ads further suggest that homosexuality is a condition that can be, in effect, cured. The gall of these folks surpasses my meager understanding.

In their own eyes, they're on a divine mission, the last bastion of defense for a nation beset and oppressed by hordes of marauding gay men and lesbians. Robert Knight of the Family Research Council, a conservative group supporting the ad campaign, puts it like this: "We're basically not going to take it anymore."

And one struggles to understand just what "it" the guy is referring to. Have gay people been roasting straight children on a spit or something?

No, the offense gay people have committed can be boiled down to this: They exist. That's it. Forget all the other claptrap about "decency" and "family values." Religious conservatives' problem with gays is simply that they exist and, increasingly, refuse to do so in shame at the margins of American culture. They no longer hide as they once did. They seek to define themselves instead of being defined by the fears and stereotypes of others. In a pluralistic society, that's their right.

If some don't like them, think them abominable, think them headed to hell in the express lane, fine. That's their right. But don't attack gay people and pretend it's because of some harm they've done you. That's not a right — it's a lie.

There are many people who believe things I

do not. Many lifestyles I find bizarre, bewildering and downright strange. But wouldn't it be a saner world if we could all resolve that unless someone else's beliefs or behaviors pose a direct threat, then what is done in the privacy of those other lives is none of our business? The tired tirades of conservative bigots aside, gays don't pose that threat.

I don't feel this way because I have a brother who's gay. Heck, I felt the same when that guy was so deep in the closet his breath smelled like mothballs. I just find that I'm kept busy enough running my own life without trying to run someone else's.

Which pretty neatly sums up the way most Americans seem to feel about gays: Live and let live. Polls show no endorsement of gay life, but no obsessive fear of it, either.

So what's with the religious conservatives? Why are they so compelled to press nosy noses to the window of other lives, to meddle in the affairs of other people, to impose their creed upon those who never asked the favor? There's something in it that is anathema to American ideals of individual freedom.

It's nice of them to suggest that homosexuals can be cured of their affliction. But from where I sit, gay people aren't the ones who need it.

Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald. Write him at The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla. 33132.

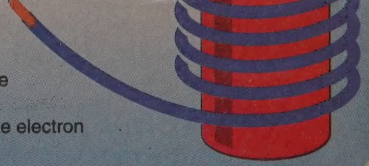
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dynamic guy.



you don't have a compass, find yourself a Boy Scout
and borrow his. They're supposed to *be prepared* for
these kind of favors. Wrap the lamp cord around the
compass as in this drawing. Then turn the lamp on and
off. Watch the compass. Its needle should spin as you switch the lamp on and off.

SO WHAT: You just repeated a Faraday experiment. He found that electric currents
create magnetic fields. There was a link between magnets and electricity. He
studied that link further to invent the generator and electric motor.

cross the
magnetic field,
electrons are
pushed through the
wire. That makes
generators a lot like electron
pumps.



P.S. from Jax: When it was first invented, a generator was called a dynamo (Dl-nam-o). It was based on the word *dynamic*, which is based on the ancient Greek word for *powerful*. Sometimes we use that word to describe people

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The Gazette

Is conversion possible?

Sexuality not so simple as just a decision

When Anne Heche said on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" that she was not a lesbian before she met Ellen DeGeneres, the remark made Oprah's eyebrows arch.

Like many of us, Oprah thought homosexuals were born, not made. But, as Heche illustrates, sexuality is not as simple as that. Many homosexuals had at least one heterosexual experience before discovering they were most comfortable as homosexuals.



Sexuality is complicated. Psychologists are divided over the roots of sexual orientation. But that ambiguity doesn't stop people on both sides of the gay rights question from trying to oversimplify it.

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CLARENCE PAGE

Sexuality is complicated. Psychologists are divided over the roots of sexual orientation. But that ambiguity doesn't stop people on both sides of the gay rights question from trying to oversimplify it.

Take, for example, the coalition of 15 religiously and politically conservative groups who have launched a national ad campaign inviting homosexuals to do what Heche did, but in reverse.

The groups ran ads in The Washington Post, The New York Times and USA Today that featured the stories of men and women who say they have converted from homosexuality to heterosexuality as a result of Christian faith.

"We're standing for the truth that homosexuals can change," one headline said.

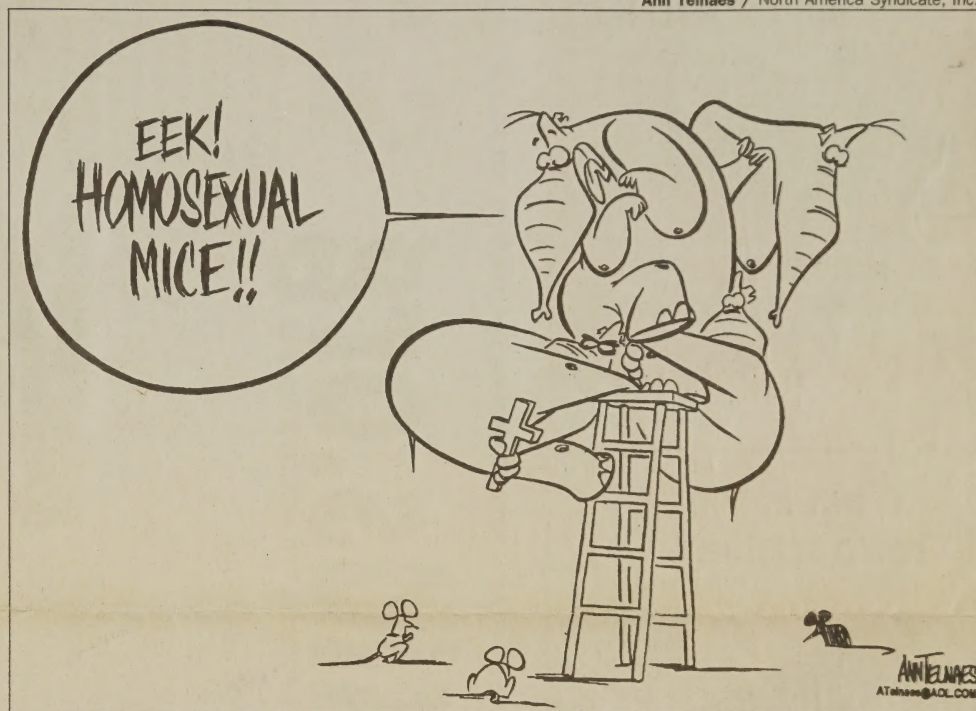
Promoting the ads were Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, Gary Bauer's Family Research Council, Colorado for Family Values and other familiar foes of laws to protect homosexuals from discrimination.

It is also not purely coincidental that these coincide with mounting election-year pressure from the Christian Right on Republican candidates for Congress and the White House.

But the "Truth in Love" campaign insists they are motivated mainly by Christian love and a desire to "help" homosexuals. They also want to defend Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Green Bay Packers football star Reggie White from what they call "anti-Christian" attacks for remarks both have made in recent months that termed homosexuality as sinful or a sickness.

But what, may I ask, are they protecting? When former White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry called Lott's views backward, Janet Folger, national director of the Center for Reclaiming America, called his remarks "anti-Christian thinking," even though McCurry made no reference to religion.

And when it comes to backwardness, Reggie



White wins the prize with his remarks to the Wisconsin legislature in June. White, who is black, said he was offended that homosexuals compare their plight with the plight of black people. "Homosexuality is a decision," he said. "It's not a race."

White also praised his fellow black people for being "very gifted in what we call worship and celebration," white people for being "blessed with the gift of structure and organization," Asian people for "creativity and invention ... they can turn a television into a watch" and Hispanics for "family structure ... they can put 20 or 30 people in one home."

With that bold example of narrow, uninformed thinking, White refuted his own argument. No, homosexuality is not a race, but, if we blacks have anything in common with gays, it is the persistence with which both of us have been stereotyped by others who presume to know us better than we know ourselves.

Sexuality is not a race, but neither is it simply a decision. Behavior is a decision.

Reports of people changing their sexual orientation have been greatly exaggerated, Anne Heche notwithstanding, particularly by those who want to disqualify homosexuals from claiming legitimate victim status in the political arena.

Even leaders of Exodus International, the Christian group that works to convert gays, claims limited results. Bob Davies, executive

director of Exodus, reports up to 40 percent achieve "marked change" in behavior and identity.

John Paulk, a former drag queen who appears in the ads with his formerly lesbian wife Anne and their son Timmy, told Newsweek magazine that he expects "just one-third of gays and lesbians who seek to change will stay straight."

Psychologists aren't even that certain. New York psychologists Ariel Shidlo and Michael Schroeder told the magazine that the vast majority of the 100 would-be converts they have interviewed remained gay, despite powerful drugs and shock therapies some had received.

As a matter of public policy, it shouldn't make any difference. People should be judged under law by their behavior, not by their thoughts.

When someone asked the late beat poet Allen Ginsberg, if he chose to be a homosexual, he responded that only a fool would choose to expose themselves to so much abuse and social ostracism.

I don't know if Ginsberg was right or not, but he sounds like he knew more about the subject than Reggie White does. Poor Reggie. He's trying to be part of the solution, but he sounds like part of the problem.

Page is a columnist with Tribune Media Services. Write him in care of 435 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1500, Chicago, IL 60611.



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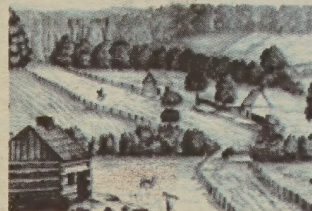
"So You Want to Make a Car" examines the auto industry inside out, giving you a glimpse into the world of cars, from the Ford Model T to the Porsche 911.

Shift into high gear and head to <http://www.ipl.org/autov/> on a tour of the Chrysler Sterling Heights Plant in Michigan. Callers and body shop experts ply their trades on the assembly line. Watch movie clips, photos and links to solar cars, antique cars and an interactive game that lets you build a car for

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Meet the Springers, a 200-year-old family. By snooping around in their house at: <http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/nmah/notkid/ubh/QQintro.htm> you can figure out what their life was like in early America. Have you ever found some strange old object in a field or in the basement and wondered what it was used for? That's what archeologists and historians do every day. It's kind of like detective work. The stuff from people's houses is the evidence for finding out what life was like hundreds of years ago.

Learn the tricks of the trade by making your own theories about the objects in the Springers' house. Then, compare your notes to what the pros found. This site will even show you what the objects in YOUR house might tell future historians about your family. So you might want to get rid of those dirty socks....



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What automotive career does Robert teach kids about?



AskAmy 4Kids.org

Dear Amy: What can I do about pollution in my area?
Nathan, Madison, Wis.

Dear Nathan: The Web has just made it easier to find out about pollution in anybody's city. Check out the Scorecard at <http://www.scorecard.org>. You can enter any ZIP code in the United States and immediately receive a street map that pinpoints the exact locations of many nearby polluters. From the map you can see how close they are to your house or your school. Scorecard lets you send faxes—for free—to the top polluters in your area, telling them your concerns. And it connects you to information about pollution prevention—ways that companies can avoid having to pollute in the first place.

Dear Amy: My grandma only speaks Spanish. I find Web sites for her?—Melissa, Kansas City, Mo.
Dear Melissa: Now there's "Yahoo! en español" at <http://espanol.yahoo.com/>. It's a directory of Spanish language Web sites that are indexed like the rest of the Yahoo. Most of the other search sites have ways of finding things in languages other than English, too. Search using a non-English word and see what the site returns to you. Once you get your grandmother's help, I bet she can take over the mouse and find her way around the Web herself.

Send your comments or questions about the Web to Amy at: Ask Amy, 3001 Dole Center, Lawrence, KS 66045 or AskAmy@4Kids.org



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